



Montana Public Service Commission  
1701 Prospect Avenue  
PO Box 202601  
Helena MT 59620-2601

September 24, 2004

For more information, contact:  
Greg Jergeson – 406-444-6166  
Kim Moran – 406-444-6182

### **PSC APPROVES TRIANGLE TELEPHONE'S & CENTRAL MONTANA COMMUNICATIONS' EXPANDED LOCAL CALLING PROPOSALS**

The state Public Service Commission on Tuesday approved the proposals of Triangle Telephone Cooperative and Central Montana Communications for extended area telephone service between and among certain Triangle and Central telephone exchanges and Qwest's Havre and Lewistown exchanges and Great Falls local calling region. Extended area service expands local calling areas so that customers' phone calls within an EAS area are local, not long-distance. However, local phone rates in an EAS area must increase to recover EAS costs.

The impact of the EAS approval will vary for each customer depending on their calling patterns. For some customers, the reduction in long-distance charges will more than offset the increase in local rates. For others, who make few long-distance calls within the expanded area, that will not be the case. Both Triangle and Central will also offer measured local service options at a lower monthly rate to customers. Qwest will increase its statewide monthly EAS increment of \$2.44 by 17 cents and extend the increment to Qwest customers in the Havre and Lewistown exchanges.

According to Commissioner Greg Jergeson, customer surveys conducted by Triangle and Central indicated most of their customers supported the changes and the PSC's public hearings and subsequent public comment were largely supportive as well.

The PSC's approval is subject to these conditions:

- Triangle and Central must file EAS implementation plans within 45 days that include an implementation schedule, an explanation of how EAS options will be presented to customers, and a description of carriers' agreed-upon interconnection and compensation arrangements.
- EAS implementation must be started within 90 days and completed in 180 days.
- Qwest and Central must submit tariffs reflecting the EAS rates at within 20 days prior to implementation.
- Customers must be allowed to change their local service option without charge within 90 days after EAS implementation.

As a result of the PSC's approval of the EAS proposals, Triangle's Loma exchange and Central's Fort Benton and Geraldine exchanges will be added to Qwest's existing Great Falls local calling region. Central's residential customers in Fort Benton and Geraldine will pay an extra \$7 per month for unlimited local calling and business customers will pay an additional \$16 per month. Triangle's unlimited local calling rates for Loma customers will increase by \$10.95 for residential customers and by \$18.95 for business customers.

The following Triangle exchanges will be added to Qwest's existing Havre exchange: Havre North and South, Big Sandy, Box Elder, Chester and Chester South, Chinook, Gildford, Hays/Zortman, Hingham, Hopp/Illiad, Joplin/Inverness, Kremlin, Malta South, Rudyard, Simpson, Turner and Whitewater. In addition, Central's Dodson, Harlem and Malta exchanges will be added to the expanded Havre calling region. Triangle's unlimited local calling rates for exchanges added to the Havre calling region will increase by \$9 for residential customers and by \$19 for business customers. Central's residential customers in Dodson, Harlem and Malta will pay an extra \$10 per month for unlimited local calling and business customers will pay an additional \$12.45 per month.

A new EAS region will be created by expanding Qwest's Lewistown exchange to include Triangle's Winifred exchange and Central's Moore, Hobson, Denton, Stanford and Judith Gap exchanges. Triangle's unlimited local calling rates in Winifred will increase by \$12.95 for residential customers and by \$21.95 for business customers. Central's residential customers in Moore, Hobson, Denton, Stanford and Judith Gap will pay an additional \$9 per month for unlimited local calling and business customers will pay an additional \$19 per month.

###